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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

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National Intelligence Council

[Redacted]
11 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Chief, National Intelligence Council 8

FROM: [Redacted]
Acting National Intelligence Officer, Latin America

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SUBJECT: Prospects for a Major Insurgent Offensive in El Salvador and
an Associated Military Buildup in Nicaragua.

1. Selected Intelligence Community analysts from CIA, State/INR, DIA and NSA met on 8 June to review recent intelligence. [Redacted] of a major Salvadoran insurgent offensive and a possibly related military buildup in Nicaragua. We were able to reach a general consensus on the likely prospects for each as well as some areas of particular concern.

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2. First, it was agreed that Cuban perceptions and tactics in Central America in the short term do not necessarily coincide with those of the Sandinistas or the Salvadoran insurgents, and that while the [Redacted] may have been talking of a large-scale insurgent offensive aimed at defeating the Salvadoran Army, this was not necessarily the goal or the tactics of the guerrillas themselves. Instead, there was general consensus that the insurgents are preparing an offensive with more limited goals, aimed primarily at regaining the military initiative, strengthening their domestic and international credibility, and influencing US Congressional aid decisions.

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3. The analysts agreed that the insurgent offensive may begin as early as mid-June, although guerrilla timetables often slip because of Army actions and poor coordination between factions. Rather than an all-out short term offensive, it was likely to be a slowly developing but sustained one. It may kick off with a spectacular action like attempting to seize an isolated departmental capital or sabotage a major dam site. The guerrillas also may attempt to give the impression of greater strength by attacks in San Salvador and other areas where they have long been inactive.

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4. The analysts agreed that despite forced recruitment efforts and the receipt of additional small arms and ammunition, insurgent capabilities have not increased greatly over the past six months. In fact, their morale may be somewhat lower because of Army successes and Duarte's election victory. Thus, while the insurgents may be able to achieve some temporary successes, they are not likely to greatly expand their territorial control, even in the east. There is some danger, however, that once effective Army commanders like Col. Cruz in Morazan are removed, the guerrillas may be able to score some spectacular tactical victories. In summary, the analysts were agreed that while we should not overestimate the insurgent's capabilities and intentions, neither should we underestimate their ability to achieve some of their more limited goals.

5. The Community analysts could see little direct relationship between the expected Salvadoran offensive and the increased Nicaraguan military buildup. They see almost no prospect that Nicaraguan forces will attempt to intervene directly in El Salvador or attack Honduras for fear of provoking a US response. Rather they believe that the Sandinistas are concerned about a US-supported attack and are arming themselves accordingly. They did note that Managua may believe that its support for the Salvador insurgency may provoke a strong US reaction should the guerrilla offensive be successful.

6. There was considerable concern that the military buildup in Nicaragua may be taking place in conjunction with a substantial increase in Cuban forces there. Most analysts were not prepared to discount [redacted] that there are some 7,000 to 8,000 Cuban regular troops in Nicaragua in addition to some 3,000 to 4,000 civilians. There was even speculation that the recent armor deliveries to El Bluff could represent a pre-positioned Cuban armored brigade. [redacted]

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7. Finally, the analysts took note of the increased pace of construction at a number of Nicaraguan airfields and generally agreed that it may represent further preparations for military deliveries. Another possibility is that the construction may be related to a further potential increase in the Cuban force presence. In summary, there was agreement that we need to continue to monitor the Nicaraguan military buildup and the Cuban force presence there closely.

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